

# The Protector of Finance

Tales of Resilius Marvel, Guardian of Bank Treasure

By WELDON J. COBB

## THE DEAD YEAR'S HARVEST

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THERE was a quick call at the telephone, and Resilius Marvel seized the receiver as though he had been expecting a message. I knew by the expression of his eyes that the first word imparted over the wire met his anticipations. Then I heard him ask in rapid succession: "Letters—numbers—series?" He pencilled rapidly on his shirt cuff as the replies came. "Verify," were his final words: "E. 296,701, Series of 1906." Very well, and hung up the receiver and arose to his feet. "Come with me," he added simply, and I knew that the great head of the United Bankers' Protective association was started on another "case."

"E. 1906," I observed with a sudden shock of memory as we reached the street—"If that applies to a one hundred dollar treasury note—" "It does," vouchsafed Marvel tersely.

"Then you probably have the man." "If instructions have been followed, yes," replied my friend. "Who is it?" "The Central National." "That makes ten." "You keep good tabs," complimented Marvel—"exactly ten. What an optimist this original shaver of the queer must be!"

Briefly, within a week ten counterfeit \$100 notes had been passed upon the city banks. On a certain Monday morning a spruce, sprightly young man of about twenty-five had come into our institution and had presented himself at the paying teller's window with five \$100 treasury notes. He asked to have them changed into bills of smaller denominations and was readily accommodated. The teller had noted they were comparatively new, that their serial numbers were consecutive. An expert glance satisfied him, however, that they were all right. They were placed with other hundreds to make up a package of twenty, or \$1,000, and nothing more was thought of it.

Four mornings later Resilius Marvel came into the bank with No. 296, 695 of the same series. Across its face was stamped the word "Counterfeit" in broad red letters taking in the full front surface of the note. "Have you any of those?" he inquired, placing the bill before me. "I will find out," I replied, and then rather wonderingly scanned the note. It would have passed muster with me, and I counted myself something of a specialist in my line.

It took half an hour to go the rounds of the cages. It is almost second nature for a teller to remember any bill he has handled, especially those of large denomination. The man who had changed the treasury notes for a stranger soon had the five in question in evidence. Two more of the \$100 notes turned up twenty-four hours later at another institution. Then two other banks each contributed like bills. In each case a smiling, easy-mannered young fellow had passed the notes. Marvel had named progress to me as it culminated. Now a tenth note had turned up. I accompanied him to the Central National.

The floor officer was waiting for Marvel, and knew him. There was a flutter of importance and excitement in his manner at being concerned in a professional transaction with the great head of the United Bankers' Protective association. He took us to the paying teller, saying nothing, but looking the part of an humble instrument of justice who had co-operated in "capturing a crook." The teller, looking wise and keen and in a suppressed way exultant, beckoned to us, and we went beyond the railing and around into an anteroom, where he joined us.

"There is one of the hundred you flagged for us, Mr. Marvel," he said, and handed a \$100 bill to my friend. Resilius Marvel nodded, gave the bill a close scrutiny, and returned it to the teller with the words: "Cancel it and preserve it for evidence. Where is the man?"

The teller slipped the note into his coat pocket and took out a key. "This way," he directed, and we followed him down a narrow corridor. As he started to open a steel-studded door Marvel halted him.

"One moment," he said—"tell me the circumstances of the matter."

"Why, your warning had prepared us all, of course," explained the bank man. "When the fellow with his note presented it, I pretended to be called by my assistant in the next cage. I quietly pressed the call button, signaling what I wanted to the chief clerk's desk. He and the floor officer came up quietly. The man at the window looked amazed and indignant as the officer seized his arm. He demanded to know what his arrest meant. When I told him that the bill was counterfeit, it seemed to me as if all of a sudden some frightful suggestion drove his face colorless. He nearly fell to the floor. Now? Yes, Mr. Marvel," and the speaker unlocked the door. He started back as he opened it, and stared blankly at a man standing in the center of the

under his arm. With the animal, he led the way to an auto, and we proceeded back to the Central National. The city center streets were comparatively deserted, as the business crowds had gone homewards some time since. Marvel carried the dog to the barred front of the bank, set the little animal on the pavement and returned to the machine.

"Just follow that dog," he ordered to the chauffeur, and fixed his eye closely upon the object of his interest. The fox terrier crowded through the barred gate protecting the entrance to the bank, ran up to the great bronze doors and lifted its head and howled. Then it sniffed around in a circle, came out to the pavement, threw its nose up in the air in several directions and trotted down the street on a bee line.

There could be no doubt that the clever animal knew the way home, for it proved never at fault, never hesitated, and buckled down steadily as if knowing it had a long jaunt ahead. This proved true. It made only square turns at corners, and gradually left the business center for the better residence portion of the city.

"Keep close," directed Marvel to the chauffeur as the animal reached a broad boulevard and increased its pace. "Follow," he ordered additionally, as the dog suddenly diverged from its course and turned down a broad alley. Then, as our forerunner reached an iron fence enclosing a garden and crowded through between two pickets, Marvel spoke one quick, imperative word: "Stop!" leaped out of the machine and ran up to the fence.

I could see beyond him. The dog had burst into a joyful bark, and al-

though business integrity, his name good for the entire reserve of our bank. I wondered, too, how my friend, skilled and all powerful as he was, would proceed in a case where the sure criminal trail led straight from the portals of a common prison to this abode of luxury and wealth. A servant answered a question put by Marvel, and ushered him into a majestic reception room, took his card, and we both arose as a man aged, austere, dignified, came into the apartment with an easy, old-fashioned sense of courtesy that charmed me. He had Marvel's card in his hand, and I fancied the name it bore had aroused him into curiosity or interest as to the personality it represented. Marvel weighed the man in the scales of a mature judgment, and went to the heart of his subject forthwith.

"I have come on an important and serious mission in behalf of the government, Mr. Buckingham," he announced.

"Of the government?" "Very slowly, as though difficult of utterance, Mr. Buckingham pronounced that last word. I thought he quivered, I was sure his natural ruddy color lessened.

"You have a relative, a nephew, I understand," resumed Marvel; and then followed a rapid description of the young man who had passed the \$100 counterfeits—plus his denuded, mustache—building up a portrait that I saw at once was recognizable by our host.

"You are describing my nephew, Alan Dean," said Mr. Buckingham, steeled cold, because he was controlling himself. "What of him, sir?"

"Just this, Mr. Buckingham: He is in my hands after passing ten coun-

terfeit \$100 treasury notes on the city banks."

"Did you see it?" he inquired. I guessed what, and told him so, and ran hurriedly over an item announcing that a new \$100 treasury note counterfeit—the particulars concerning which, even to the approximate serial numbers, were given—had appeared on the market.

"Some one has babbled," scolded my friend. "It may make a complication."

I did not see how, just then. I knew better—later. Marvel had nothing to impart to me of progress or importance in the case, but late that afternoon there came a hurry call for me from him. I closed my desk and was soon in his company.

He handed me a card which he took from an envelope. It read simply, in pencil scrawl: "I must see you—A. B."

"I may need you," observed my friend, and after a half hour's spin we arrived at the home of the millionaire.

The servant who answered the summons at the door seemed to know we were expected. She led us down the hall to a sort of library, saying that Mr. Buckingham was engaged, but that she would announce our presence shortly. Then she left us alone in the room, half darkened by the approaching shadows of eventide.

I caught some rapid words from a room beyond the heavy draperies, evidently a smoking apartment off the library. I noted, however, that Marvel heard them quicker than I, for he moved from his seat to a chair closer to the masked doorway. The words, not in the tones of Mr. Buckingham, were rapid, insistent, almost menacing:

"The plates—the plates!" There was an utterance akin to a groan, and it proceeded from the lips of the millionaire, I readily traced. Then the former voice, only clacking, wheeling and menacing at the same time, spoke again:

"Mr. Buckingham, I am here in the interests of a client who has one proposition to make to you. My promise ends with a distinct and final negative or affirmative. It places me in a regrettable and unfortunate position to be the representative of men who are dangerous criminals, but—I am a lawyer. Shall I briefly state the case?"

There was no reply, at least none audible to us. The speaker continued:

"Some years ago, your son Percival Buckingham, chief engraver for the government, was taken ill and removed to a sanitarium while you were absent in Europe. Too close application to delicate expert work had blighted his mind. He escaped from the sanitarium, and three men I will not name, but once known as the most finished shavers of the queer in the world, got hold of him. They saw their opportunity and improved it. They were shrewd, capable men and made no blunders. What they did you will now learn for the first time.

"Those men secured the upper floor of a lonely, secluded house. They fitted it up as nearly as possible like one of the work rooms in the treasury department. They took your deluded son there, and made him believe that he was producing new 1906 series \$100 plates for the government. For nearly a year that was his home. His mind did not refuse to act mechanically along the line eye and skill had directed for so many years. In brief, he made two plates, so perfect that they were almost duplicates of the original government plates. Twelve impressions were made, and two of these were tested by being placed in circulation. Today they are somewhere in existence, their validity never doubted. Within that week it must have been, while unguarded and alone, your son had a flash of his old mentality. At all events, when his three captors returned they found him gone, and with him the two treasury plates and the ten printed \$100 bills.

"Now for your end of the story, as I understand it: Your son appeared at this home, suddenly, unexpectedly. He must have brought the plates and the notes. You believed him a counterfeiter, for before he could explain to you, his insane mood returned. You at once removed him to a private asylum. Later you sent him with a relative, Alan Dean, to Paris. He regained his reason. Today he occupies a studio in the French capital, patronized by devotees of high art. Happily married, all that year of mental darkness forgotten, restored to his right mind, he is a wonderful producer of art etchings, a man of fame, and marvelously prosperous. You have been content to keep him out of the country. You never sought to enlighten him as to that lost year in his life."

"I know all this—why go over it!" came in muffled tones of suffering from the millionaire.

"So that the matter may be clearly understood between us," was the prompt response. "Within a week after your son's escape from the counterfeiter, one of their number came to see you. He caused you to believe that your son had deliberately left the government service to go into a scheme to secure millions by using his professional skill as a counterfeiter. You told him a lie. You led him to believe that your son had destroyed the ten treasury notes and the two plates. The man, however, threatened to find the son you had hidden away, to denounce him to the police as a dangerous counterfeiter. To silence this man, you paid \$50,000, and that ended the matter for the time being."

"I know not how," continued the lawyer, "but my client, when today he saw the announcement in the newspapers that certain counterfeit \$100 treasury notes of a certain series were in circulation, at once was forced to an irresistible conclusion. Those notes came from this house—they could come from nowhere else. Your nephew, only recently arrived from Paris, where your son is living, is missing from your home since yesterday. A man answering his description passed the notes. Putting this and that together, my client reasons that you have also the plates. He must have them."

Again a groan from the lips of the tortured man.

We heard a tottering step cross the floor. Marvel was at my side as the draperies were agitated. He reached me in a swift glide and drew me beside him to a curtained alcove in the library as Arnold Buckingham entered and turned on a light.

The old man's lips were trembling and he was whispering hoarsely to himself. His eyes were those of a man on the verge of losing his senses. He produced a key, opened a strongbox safe, and from some inner recess drew out two oblong pieces of metal. In a flash Marvel was at his side.

"On your life, not a word!" he abjured the shrinking, well-nigh stricken millionaire. "I will deal with the wretches who seek to blackmail you."

I pressed to the side of Buckingham and supported him, or he would have fallen. I saw Marvel hold the plates toward the light. He drew a magnifying glass from his pocket and looked them over.

What was the significance of the quick, momentary smile that crossed his lips, I knew not then. Before I could even conjecture a cause, he had parted the draperies, and I heard the lawyer's metallic voice exclaim:

"Resilius Marvel!"

"You know me," was the stern reply. "And I you, Israel Craft, disbarred attorney, fence, go-between and agent of the hunted and lost. You do well to strain the limit of justice to the danger point."

"I am within the law," crackled from the mean, servile lips.

"Admitted. What I wish to know is—have you the affidavits you boasted of to Mr. Arnold Buckingham a minute since?"

"I have."

"Will you add a statement of your knowledge of this unfortunate business?"

"For the plates—yes."

Marvel led the man into the library. He pointed to an open desk, and said simply:

"Write."

It was at the end of ten minutes that I saw Resilius Marvel receive into his hands four documents. He scrutinized them closely. Then he said:

"There are the plates. Now your men and my men are quits."

I was amazed—more than that, petrified. I saw Marvel accompanying the lawyer to the door. Then, returning, he drew Buckingham aside. He conversed with him in low tones. At the end of ten minutes I saw hope and courage come into the face of the old man. It was the relief and gratitude of a person drawn from the edge of a fearsome precipice.

"The nephew who passed those notes, and who recently came from the son in Paris," explained Marvel as we left the mansion, "was told by Percy Buckingham that he might have what he found in his old home room. He stumbled across those counterfeit notes. The son is in happy ignorance of that blighted year in his life. The father need bear no further anxiety. He will reimburse the banks gladly, the affair must be hushed up, and the man who gets the plates—"

He paused in an impressive way. Then Resilius Marvel laughed—a low, strange laugh of intense satisfaction. "But they have them! I do not understand," I floundered.

"They have them, yes," assented Marvel, "and so much worthless trumpery they are."

"I do not yet comprehend you."

"They bear a sure record, that in his lucid awakening the night of his escape, Percy Buckingham placed upon them," said Marvel. "They are as useless as old metal."

"You mean—?"

"When these knaves come to print their issue, they will find that, finely but plainly engraved across front and back plate, is one warning word."

"You mean?"

"Counterfeit."

### An Educational Garden.

The educational garden of Dr. J. B. Hurry, a horticulturist of Reading, England, is a novelty as a private enterprise. Useful plants of various kinds are grouped in several special plots. Among plants employed in medicine are eucalyptus, belladonna, acorn, stramonium, gentian, liquorice, podophyllin, asafetida, valerian, henbane, castor oil, cinchona, and opium poppy; foods include such plants as maize, millet, sugar, rice, bananas, arrowroot, ginger, pepper, chlorey, olive, and carnamon; plants supplying clothing and textile materials embrace flax, hemp, cotton, jute, ramie, and nettle; and there are such plants yielding dyes as woad, indigo, madder, dyers weed, turmeric, annatto, and alkanet. Conservatories display tea, coffee, soyas beans, monkey-nuts, guava, chick pea, cinnamon, and camphor. In the garden is also a museum, and in this numerous industrial products are shown, with labels referring to the plants from which they are derived. On certain days the public, including the older school children, is given free admission to the garden.



I HAVE COME ON AN IMPORTANT AND SERIOUS MISSION IN BEHALF OF THE GOVERNMENT, MR. BUCKINGHAM, HE ANNOUNCED.

most instantly a stout woman, evidently a servant, crossed my range of vision. She caressed and talked to the leaping animal and walked to the fence, as if expecting that the animal's arrival prefaced that of its expected master. She came directly up to Marvel, the fence between them. He spoke to her and she answered him, took a look down the alley, and, turning, went back towards a pretentious appearing mansion facing the avenue.

"Drive to the next street and wait for us," Marvel said to the chauffeur, and beckoned me to join him. "We will get around to the front of the house," he remarked, as we completed the length of the lane, and turned to carry out this plan. "That is the home of the dog. I asked the woman you saw if the dog belonged there."

"And she said yes?" "With the addendum that its owner was the nephew of her master, and she wondered why he did not come home with the animal, as he usually did."

It was no task to locate the front of the lot where the dog had run to cover. It was an imposing stone structure. We halted in front of it, and my friend read aloud the name engraved on the broad old-style silver plate on one of the ornamental front doors:

"Arnold Buckingham."

Then Resilius Marvel looked at me, and my eyes meeting his expressive glance, full of wonder, reflected somewhat a manifest surprise, if not a positive shock in his own.

There was not a better name at the banks than that of Arnold Buckingham. Resilius Marvel knew it from hearsay, and I from practical knowledge of a financial responsibility rated way up in the millions. There could not help but be a direct challenge in my face. My companion simply shrugged his shoulders.

"Come," he said, his course of procedure boldly formulated in his mind within the space of a minute, and he led the way up the steps, rang the front door bell and stepped inside the vestibule.

I wondered what strange freak of fate had led us to this lordly mansion, to the presence of a man retired from active business with a royal fortune, his honored record a synonym for

terfeit \$100 treasury notes on the city banks."

I could not resist an impulse of in-